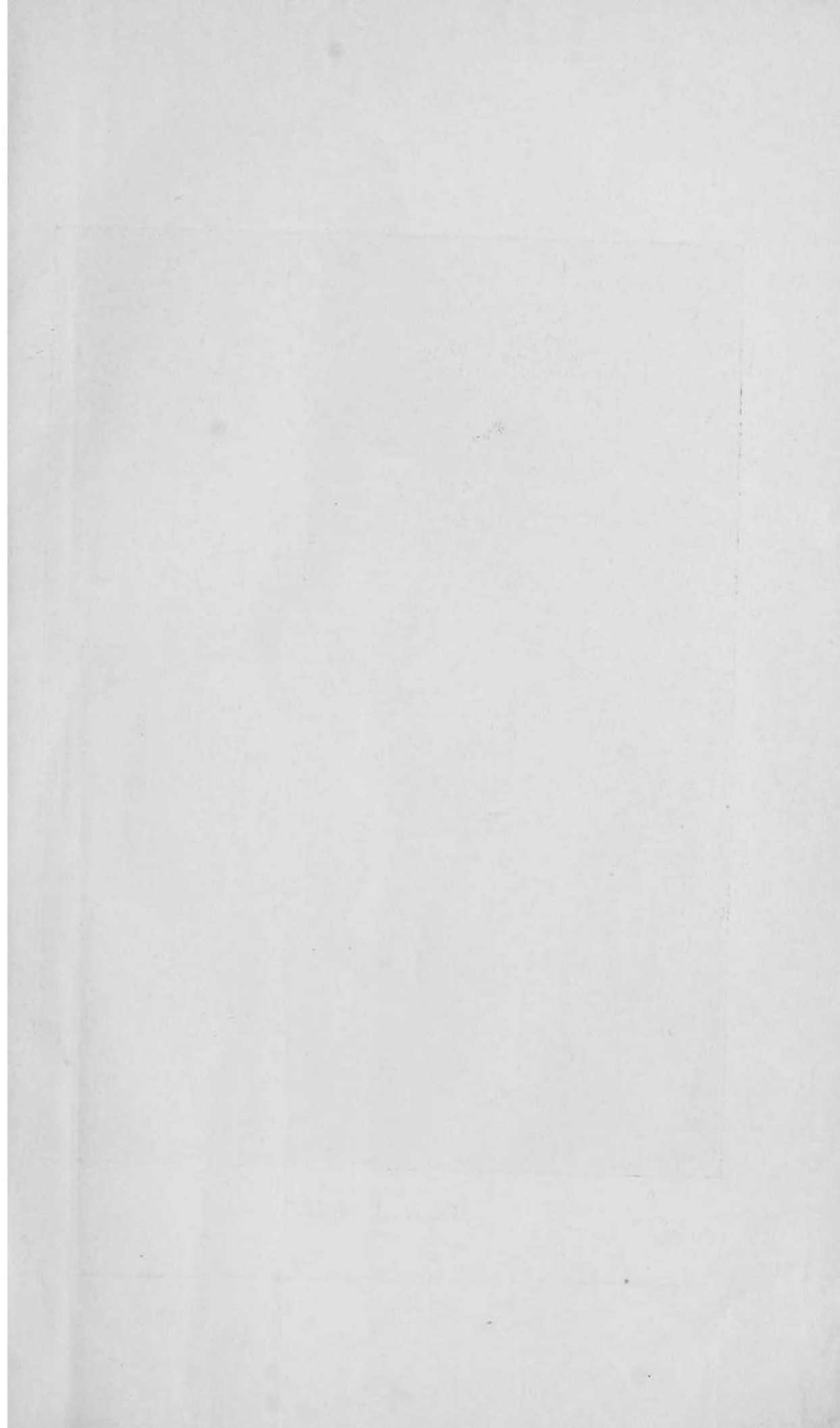


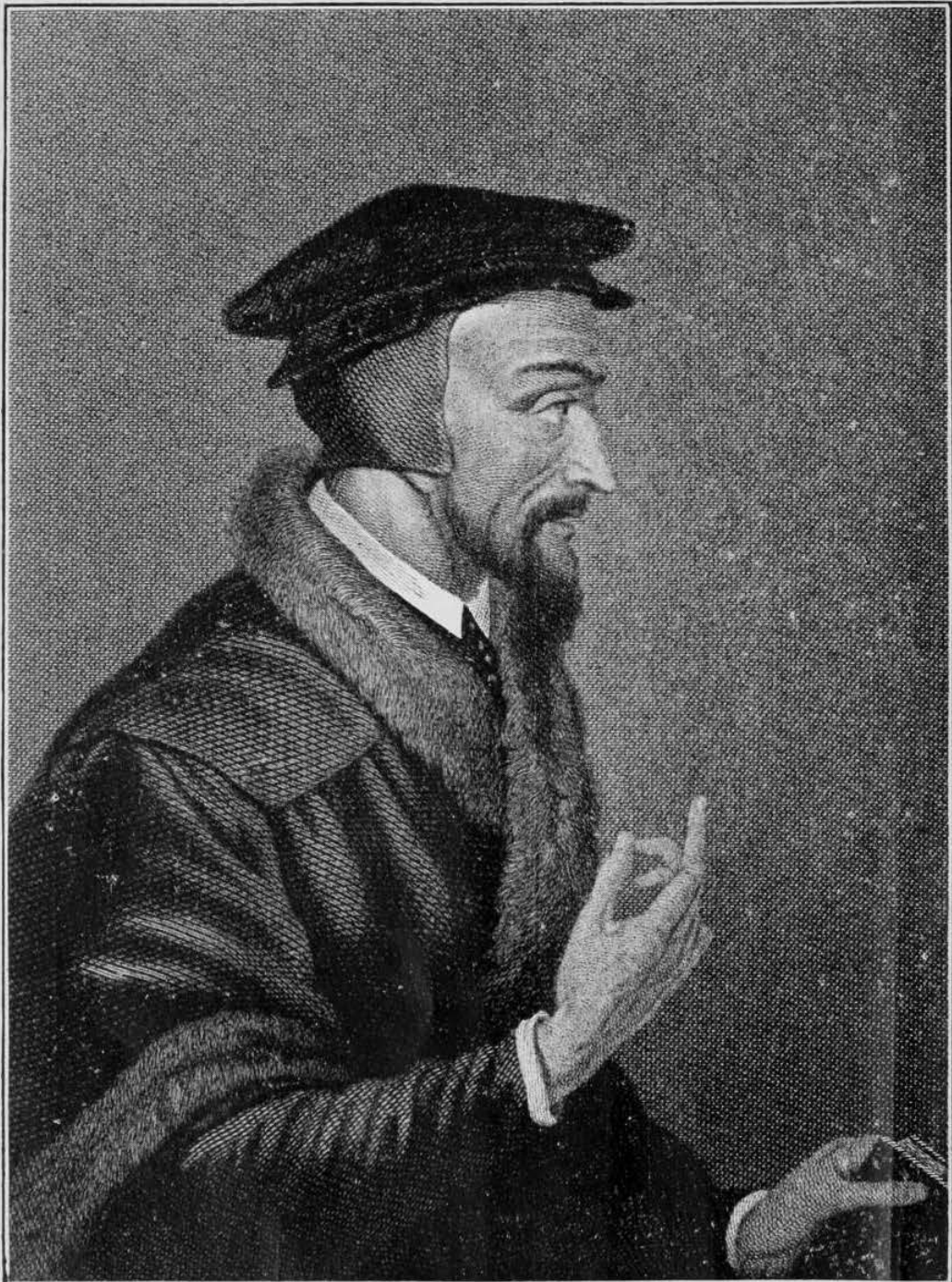
LIBRARY OF PRINCETON  
NOV 7 1924

AN OUTLINE  
OF  
The History  
OF  
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH  
OF  
AMERICA.  
BY  
Rev. Henry Van der Werp.

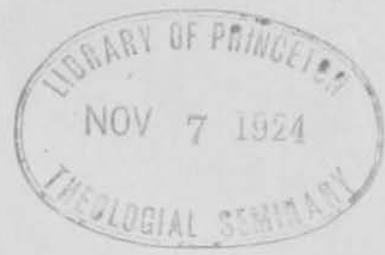
HOLLAND, MICH.  
H. HOLKEBOER, Printer.  
1898.

BX6815  
V24





JOHN CALVIN.



AN OUTLINE

OF

The History

OF

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

OF

AMERICA.

BY

✓  
Rev. Henry Van der Werp.

---

HOLLAND, MICH.  
H. HOLKEBOER, Printer.  
1898.

✓

*At the urgent request of highly esteemed brethren in The United Presbyterian Church the following pages first appeared in the columns of "The United Presbyterian" and "The Midland."*

*In compliance with the desire expressed by leaders in The Christian Reformed Church and by valued friends from other denominations I readily send this new publication upon a wider field of hoped-for usefulness.*

THE WRITER.

AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY  
OF  
The Christian Reformed Church  
OF  
America.

---

I.

The Christian Reformed Church, as far as its organization in America is concerned, does not date back any farther than A. D. 1857, a year before the consolidation of that elect remnant of Christ's body, since christened the United Presbyterian Church. As for the origin and early history of the Christian Reformed Church, we have to go beyond the waters, back to Reformation times and to the old country, the Netherlands. With holy pride and glorious proof we are right in giving her a place of honor as the historic lineal descendant of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland, called into being by the grace of God and the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord.

The Standards—all of them thoroughly Calvinistic—of these churches, which may justly be styled their formulæ concordiæ, mentioned in the historical order are:

1. The Belgic Confession, or Confession of Faith of the Reformed churches, containing 37 articles, published in 1562 in the Holland language, drawn up originally in the French language, in 1559, by Guido de Bres—or De Bray—who died a martyr at Doornik, Belgium, 1567.

2. The Heidelberg Catechism, composed at the request of Frederic III, surnamed the Wise, the well-known patron of the reformers, Prince electoral of the Palatinate, by two illustrious professors of theology at the University of Heidelberg, Saxony: Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus; translated and published in the Holland tongue by Peter Dathenus, a zealot in the cause of the Reformed churches. Since 1568 up to the present day this Heidelberg Catechism has been the manual of instruction for old and young, in pulpit and Bible class, having been purposely divided in 52 sections, according to the Sabbaths of the year, so as to be annually held forth and explained to the people.

3. The Canons of Dordt. The famous Synod of Dordrecht—or Dordt—was convened to oppose and refute the rising tide of Arminianism in the Holland churches. It was in session from Nov. 13, 1618, to May 29, 1619. It may well be called a General Assembly, as constituted not only by representatives from the mother country, but also by delegates from those churches abroad which held the reformed and presbyterian principles in doctrine and form of government. Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, France and Switzerland were duly represented by person or by letter.

The Great Britain divines were Georgius, bishop of Landa; Josephus Hall, D.D., dean of Wigorn; John Davenantius, D.D., professor of theology in Cambridge University and regent of the Queen's College a costi; Samuel Wardus, D.D., archdeacon of Taunton and regent of Sidney College in

Cambridge University. We find no mention made of Scotch delegates. As in those early struggles for religious liberty the Scotch churches (congregations) had mainly to contend for the presbyterian form of government against prelacy and hierarchy, I presume said churches styled themselves generally "presbyterian," though at a later period the name "reformed" has been accepted by some.

The churches on the continent however, had to follow other lines of defense, viz., against heresies and dangerous deviation from the truth as embraced by the fathers of the Reformation, and therefore they preferred to be called "reformed," their form of church polity invariably being presbyterian. Indeed, it is hard to understand how a reformed church can be other than presbyterian; while at the same time it should not be forgotten that a Church holding the presbyterian form may have hard times in upholding and defending the truth as it is in Jesus, as may be proven by the history of the Scotch and Holland Churches, which we are going to show now.

When in the memorable year 1688, William III, Prince of Orange, son in-law to James II, then king of England, came to the rescue of the oppressed and persecuted Protestants of England and Scotland, the rights of the Church were restored and presbyterianism re-established in these parts. But not so easily were truth and peace maintained within its walls. Though the Calvinistic Westminster Confession and Catechisms were its accepted creed, all kinds of sects and sectarians found their way into the Established Church of Scotland, viz., Pelagians, Arians, Socinians, and such like. Expostulations on the side of the orthodox party against these errorists being tolerated within the pale of the Church were of no avail. A protest against an iniquitous action of the General Assembly was followed by the sus-

pension of such heroic and stalwart Christian men as Ebenezer Erskine, Alexander Moncrieff, James Fisher, and William Wilson. On Dec. 6, 1733, these four ministers organized the Associate Presbytery, standing out until this day as the patriarchs and originators of the United Presbyterian Church. They and their followers were contemptibly nicknamed seceders, but they were no more seceders from truth and righteousness than the heroes of the Reformation, whose faith they held.

We cannot refrain from—nor do we apologize for—this little digression from the straight line of narration, since there are so many striking coincidences in the history of both the United Presbyterian and Christian Reformed Churches. Even the sobriquet of “seceders” has been awarded us, though a century later, in 1834, as the latter part of this sketch will show, and has been inflicted upon us until the present day, yea by brethren whom we love and who feel quite at liberty to boast the same godly ancestry as we Christian Reformed people do.

Now let us return to the Synod of Dordt and the history of the Reformed Church after that event. The synod was an event of no little consequence. The old sound truths were vindicated and the orthodox party came out victorious. A goodly number of Arminian preachers were compelled to give up their teachings or their country. Some two hundred left their charges and their homes. But they were not long in exile; all too soon they were allowed to return on account of the change of government authorities, those coming into power favoring their religious views and their restoration. Henceforth the visible body of Christ in Holland was infested and infected by a legion of errors.

The main reason for this deplorable state of affairs was the Erastian feature of the constitution of the Church, as

instanced by some of the "Rules of Church Government," established in the national Synod of Dordt, A. D. 1618-19. Article 4 of these Rules has this to say:

"A lawful call to persons heretofore not engaged in the ministry of the Word, either in a city or in a country, consists: (1) In the election made by the consistory (session) and deacons, after previous fasting and prayer, *and not without proper correspondence with the Christian magistracy* of the respective places, and advising with the Classis, where it has been customary. (2) An examination into the doctrines and morals of the person so elected, which shall be performed by the Classis, in the presence of the deputies of Synod, or some of them. (3) *In the approbation and approval of the magistrate*, and after that (!) of the members in full communion with the church (congregation) to which he is called. For the obtaining of which, the name of such minister shall be published in the church three Sabbaths successively, that opportunity may be given for stating lawful objections to his ordination, if any there be. (4) In public ordination in the presence of the congregation which has chosen and called him, according to the form adopted for that purpose, accompanied by suitable engagements, exhortations, prayers and impositions of hands by the minister, who preaches and presides at the ordination, and such other ministers as may be present, providing, however, that imposition of hands may be performed in the Classical Assembly (presbytery), in the case of persons sent as missionaries, or to churches under persecution."

In regard to persons already engaged in the ministry of the Word, called to another field and having accepted such call, Art. 5 runs in the same strain; *approval of the magistrate* is required.

Art. 26 charges the deacons to cause *the city almoners* to

keep up a proper correspondence with the former, for the more careful distribution of alms to the most needy.

Art. 28 enjoins ministers, elders and deacons to love, obey and reverence, and to teach the people to love, obey and reverence *the Christian magistracy, which is every way expected to be the protector and promotor of the Church and the ministry of the gospel.*

Art. 37. In all churches (congregations) there shall be a consistory (session), composed of ministers and elders, who shall meet together at least once every week, in which the minister of the Word (or ministers, if more than one) shall preside in turn and moderate the business. *The magistracy of the respective places shall have the privilege to delegate one or two of their number, these being members of the church, to the consistory (session), there to attend and to deliberate with them.*

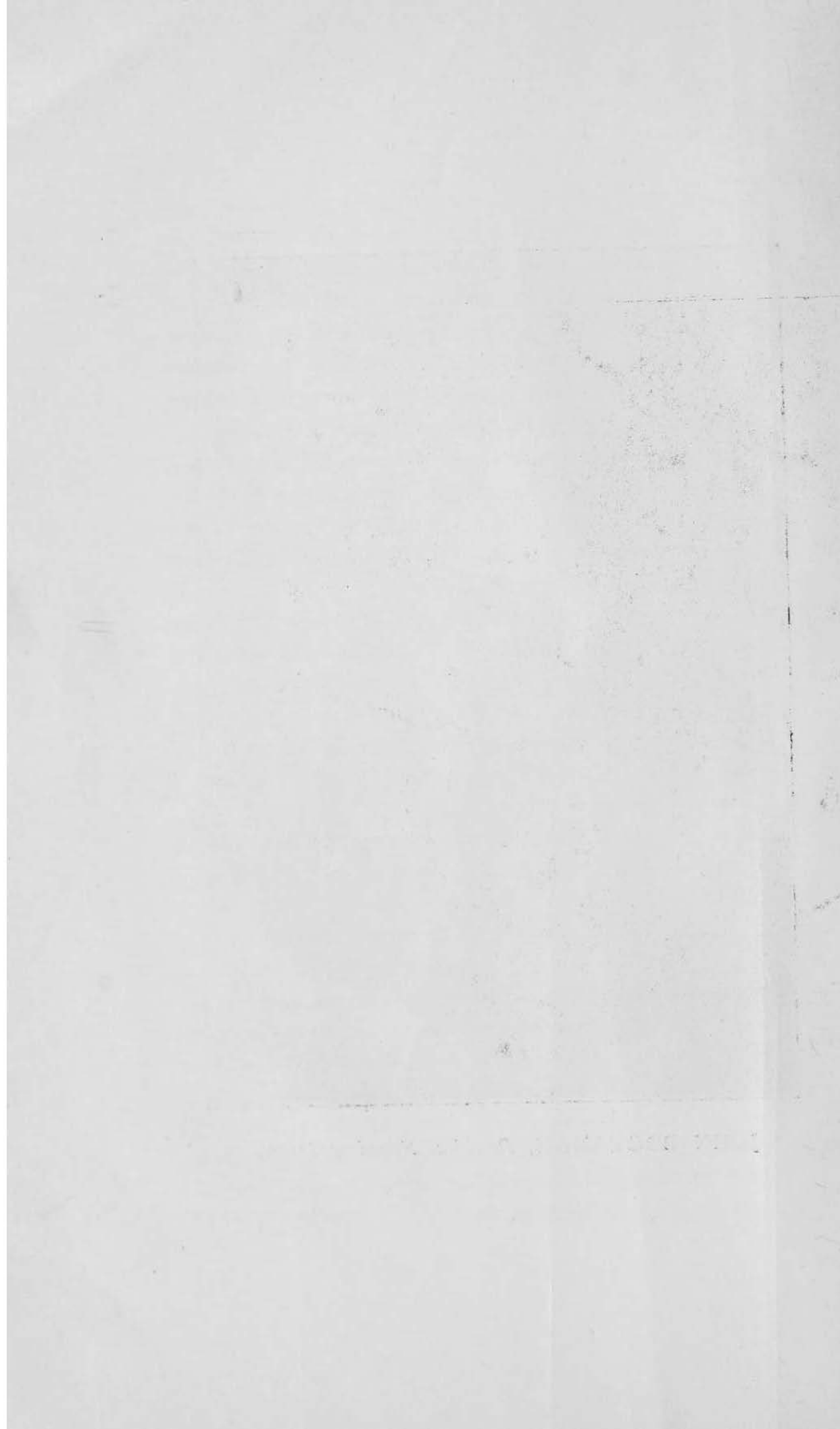
Art. 50. The General Synod shall be held ordinarily every three years, unless a pressing necessity shall require a shorter time; to this synod two ministers and two elders shall be delegated from every particular synod. The congregation, appointed to convoke *the General Assembly, shall be in duty bound to apprise the supreme magistracy of its intention*, and this body shall be free to send a few of their number to the Classis (presbytery), so that the latter, the Classis, with the knowledge, the advice and in the presence of the former, the magistracy, may settle the question.

Art. 64. Evening services *shall not be abrogated without the advice of the magistracy*, adhering to the Reformed religion.

Art. 66. Feast days. The churches shall keep, besides the Sabbath, Christmas day, Easter, and Pentecost, with the following day (!) . . . *and the ministers of the Word shall*



JOHN BOGERMAN, *President Synod of Dordt.*



*induce the magistracy to use their influence in securing uniformity in observing these days.*

We purposely entered into these somewhat lengthy details to show how the Church, which in its Synod of Dordt fought so gallantly for the faith once delivered to the saints, was hoodwinked by the chimera of the State being Christian; to show how the Church was soon afterwards fettered and held in bondage by this *mésalliance* with a so-called Christian magistracy; to show how the Church, though unintentionally and unconsciously, fostered the germ of dissension and dissolution in its own bosom. By the regulations, mentioned above, the Church was bound hand and foot, as may be easily seen.

Let me state by the way that since 1834—the year of jubilee for so many Godfearing people in the Netherlands, being the year when the Christian Reformed Church was constituted—this evil has been done away with. Religious freedom, under the sole head of the Church, is the precious legacy left us by our fathers through the kind providence of our covenant God.

Let it be well understood, however, that the famous Synod of Dordt did not stand godfather to the Dagon of the eastern hemisphere, commonly called the State Church or Established Church. The Reformed Church in the Netherlands had been such a one since 1583. In the resolutions and regulations of Dordt's Synod, we only see the great apostle's admonition to Titus exemplified: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." This however was applied in a way which any Church sooner or later has to repent of and to atone for. Not in vain has the Lord God spoken from on high: "I have anointed my King upon my holy hill of Zion!"

The material benefits of the State Church cannot outweigh the glorious liberty of the children of God's Church, neither counterbalance the spiritual richness of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And so it came to pass that, like Moses, who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, the Christian Reformed fathers of 1834 willingly surrendered the advantages of the Established Church, the love of Christ constraining them.

After 1583 the Reformed Church of the Netherlands was the Established Church. The Synod of Dordt did not bring any change in this state of affairs. The Hervormde Kerk (Established Church) of the present day is more than ever handcuffed by the yeomanry of the state. After 1583 the ministers of the Word were State officers, and all State-officers, from the secretary of state down, had to be members of the State Church. This condition of things no longer holds, since the so-called Christian state has become—as a distinguished Christian statesman once phrased it—*état athé*, an atheist state, or a state without God. These officers had their salaries paid them by the state. Expenses for church gatherings, synods, etc., were defrayed by the state. This connection of State and Church proved fatal to the latter. Erastianism and Mammonism combined almost choked the old truths to death, and made the Church a veritable babel of confusion.

For about two centuries, from 1618 until 1816, no synod was convened, the state not approving of it. In the period from 1618 until 1796, the reformed truths were maintained and preached by many faithful ministers, and taught in the universities; but, religious liberty existing, the Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Baptists, with their respective votaries tenaciously clung to their own standards. In the mean time a diversity of sectarians, not adhering to any of

these above mentioned bodies, and anxious to secure a state office and state salaries, swarmed into the Established Church. Thus heretics of all descriptions found a refuge in the State Church, and there they found themselves well nigh as safe as the unclean beasts in Noah's ark, as long as they remained within certain limits of decency, morally and religiously.

---

In the main the common people, the people of small means, adhered to the sound doctrine, and in case of their ministers not being men after their own heart and erring concerning the truth, they worshiped God in their own houses or gathered in conventicles, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord. The theological works of Hellenbroek and Brakel, Comrie and the Erskines were, and are to the present day, the favorite authors with these godly people.

As we stated before, the Established Church remained until 1796, when the French Revolution, by the will of God, changed the face of the earth. Little Holland, once great in war, either on land or sea, as no other nation on the face of the globe; once famous for its love to God and his Church, but in later years degenerated from the faith, the heroism and the patriotism of its ancestors, fell an easy prey to the great Usurper. The pious Prince William V of Orange, was exiled and fled to England. Louis Philippe, a brother to Napoleon Buonaparte, was made king of Holland, and by order of the latter a proclamation was issued to the effect: "that the Church be separated from the State and that no social advantage or disadvantage is to be derived from the profession of any religion whatever."

No General Assembly however was convened to regulate and further the interests of the Church. Now was the Church's opportunity to avail itself of the emancipation from the State; but it did not heed the time of its visitation. It could hardly be otherwise, for, while the bridegroom tarried, all the virgins slumbered and slept.

The years roll by, and we come to 1813. With the assistance of the powers Holland regained its independence. Napoleon met his Waterloo in 1815. Prince William of Orange, a son of the exiled and since deceased monarch, at the urgent petition of the Holland people, who are always ill at ease without a prince or princess from the illustrious house of Orange-Nassau, returned to his country and ascended the throne as William I, March 30, 1814.

It took this king and his advisers a long time to settle the disorganized political state of affairs, caused by the revolution; nay, he and his son, King William II, left this earthly scene ere a better day of peace and order dawned on the newly made kingdom and the Church of God.

Amongst other things, which King William I arbitrarily settled, as was his wont and his disgrace, was the government of the Established Church. The king himself convoked and constituted a General Synod. No voting or delegating by the classes (presbyteries) was deemed necessary. A single classis made objection, but was soon silenced. This kingly act rendered the Established Church not an improved but a badly impaired edition of that of 1583 and 1618. The year 1618, when the reformed truths were so gloriously vindicated, and the year 1816, when the government of the Church was usurped by the king, with all the miseries it entailed, are indelibly imprinted on the minds of all Christian Reformed people.

This synod, it is true, brought about a sort of uniformity

in the government of the Church, but this change was not for better, but for worse. The standards of the Church were apparently left intact; they were not altered or any way revised or improved; but were, all of them, practically trodden under foot by a little, seemingly insignificant, alteration, made in the "formula of assent to the doctrines of the Church," which ministers of the Word, before being licensed or installed, had to subscribe to. This could easily be done by a misconstruction and misinterpretation of the ambiguous Holland wording of the text of the formula, which it is hardly possible for the writer literally to render into the English language. Said formula runs thus:

*"We, the underwritten, testify in good faith and heartily believe that the Heidelberg Catechism and the Confession of Faith of the Netherland churches, as also the Canons of the National Synod of Dordrecht, held in the years 1618 and 1619, are conformable to the Word of God," etc.*

In the Holland language this last line could be made to read, "inasmuch" as they are conformable to the Word of God. Formerly ministers of the Word promised adherence to the standards "*quia*" i. e., *because* or as they are conformable, etc.; now they testified heartily to believe "*quatenus*," i. e., *inasmuch* as they are conformable to the Word of God. This ambiguity in the text of the Formula of Assent allowed ministers to preach their private opinions of the truth, instead of the truth as expressed in the standards of the church; and ere long the sheep of Christ's flock were tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness.

Before 1816 no preacher had the right to teach and to preach contrary to the standards of the Church; after that date that right was silently granted him, his assent to the standards having been only a conditional one. Hence no

minister could be suspended or deposed from office on account of heretical teachings.

And this is the „*status quo*” in the Established Church of the Netherlands until this day. The latest regulation issued by that great Babylon, which King William I built, is to this effect, that the holy seal of baptism is not obligatory on those wishing to become members of that Royal Institute!

---

Ever and anon there was a crying out against these iniquities; for instance, by that greatest poet of his age, William Bilderdijk, LL. D.; by his disciple, the converted Jew, commentator and poet, Isaac Da Costa, and by Rev. Schotsman of Leiden; but these were as voices crying in the wilderness, because the people for long years had become unaccustomed to the great truths of the total depravity of man and the sovereign grace of God, and finally became averse to them. Only a few God-fearing ministers adhered to the good old standards, but they contented themselves with simply preaching them. The following may account for such behavior:

In the year 1827 Rev. D. Molenaar, minister of the Gospel at the Hague, the king's residence, published a paper, entitled: "Address to all my fellow believers," which was an exposition of the calamitous condition and the imminent peril of the Church. Thousands of copies were spread broadcast over the land and eagerly read. Thus the people's eyes were opened and interest in religious matters awakened. No change for the better resulted however, neither indeed could there be. The king reigned supreme and silenced Molenaar, who was soon afterwards made by his Majesty a knight of Orange-Nassau, for what we would call "little faith." Instead of proving himself a knight of

the cross of Jesus Christ, he was made a knight of Orange-Nassau, a distinction awarded those whom the king would signally honor. Thus Rev. Molenaar—though a preacher and writer of some merit in the old orthodox line—was put to shame by those godly parents of Moses in Egyptian bondage, of whom it is written: "And they were not afraid of the king's commandment."

On this wise the once brightly shining Reformed Church of the Netherlands was gradually converted—as one of them, even a prophet of their own has tersely put it—into a synagogue of Satan; and the spiritual interests of the godly-minded among the people were sadly ignored. Many of them refrained from further attendance in the houses of public worship, and read sermons and religious treatises of the old Dutch, English and Scotch divines in their own houses, or gathered in "societies;" while yet others added to this by traveling far and wide to enjoy the preaching of an orthodox minister. For God in his great mercy had left Him a few faithful servants in the Netherlands, all the knees which had not bowed unto Baal, stalwart men and true, who realized the need of the times, studying to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, shunning profane and vain babblings, the enmity and the opposition of their colleagues notwithstanding. The latter, so-called liberals, who belied the standards of the Church, who shamelessly rejected the cardinal points of the Christian religion, were the heroes of the day, whilst the staunch reformed preachers were hardly tolerated.

---

But the time was at hand that God should raise a reformer, a young gospel preacher, whose call the people would heed; a man who, to the question of days long ago: „What are

these wounds in thine hands?" with a bleeding heart gave answer: „Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." It was the Rev. Hendrick De Cock. What Ebenezer Erskine in his day, 1733, was to the Godly Scotch, Hendrick De Cock was to the Godly Dutch in 1834.

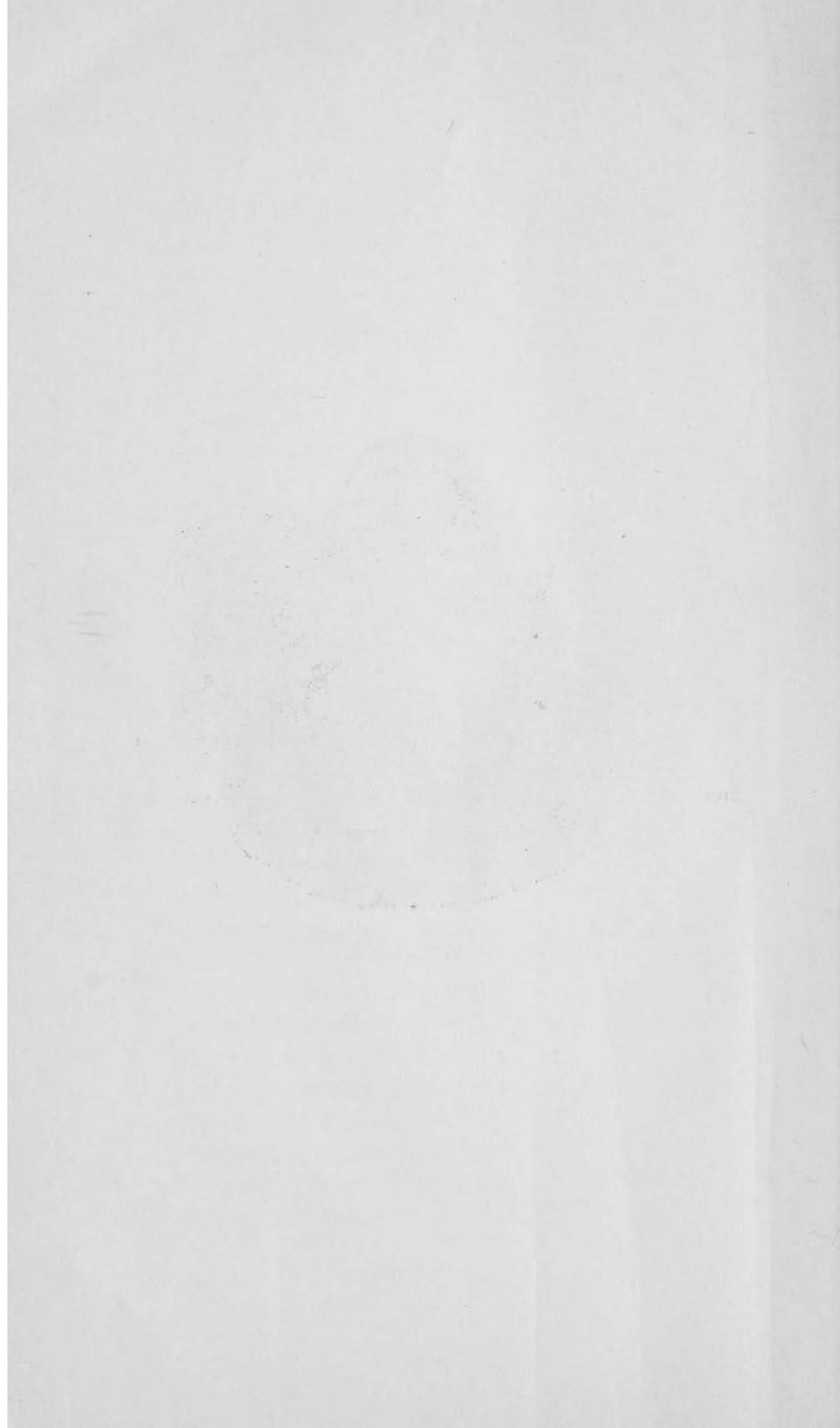
Hendrick De Cock, minister of the Word at Ulrum, province of Groningen, Netherlands, was the first to be persecuted, suspended, fined and put in prison for righteousness' sake. After his conversion in 1832, he commenced preaching the sound doctrine, vigorously protesting in press and pulpit against the prevailing corruptions in the church. As Erskine and his followers, so De Cock and his fellow-believers were soon called seceders or separatists, being made as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things; but in all their tribulations enjoying the consolation of the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy and promise: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets."

But let me state in brief the crime (?) for which De Cock was deposed from his ministerial office:

1. He allowed the young people from a neighboring congregation, where a liberal preacher was ministering, to attend his catechetical class.
2. He baptized children, from other congregations, of parents who felt aggrieved at their children receiving the holy seal of baptism at the hands of liberal ministers.
3. He issued a pamphlet entitled: "Two wolves in the sheepfold of Christ," and addressed to two ministers in the



GIJSBERTUS VOETIUS.



Church, who publicly opposed and denied the distinctive principles of the Reformed Church.

4. He wrote a preface to a little work, drawn up by another, and directed against the introduction into public worship of the so-called evangelical hymns, which the ministers were compelled to make use of.

By these actions not any of the rules or regulations of the Church were trespassed upon; nevertheless, they were considered so many grounds for deposing him from the ministry of the Word. De Cock appealed in person to the king, but was dismissed with a stern rebuke. The king had created that monstrosity, the Established Church-Institute, he wanted it to go unmolested, cost what may.

De Cock did his utmost to be reinstalled, so did his consistory (session) and his congregation, but without avail. On the contrary opposition, insult, outrage and abuse fell to their lot. On October 14, 1834, De Cock, with his consistory and the majority of his congregation, sent their act of secession—a genuine *auto-da-fé*, act of faith—to the church authorities and to the king. Next Sabbath, when De Cock went to the usual place of worship, he was prevented from entering the pulpit by a couple of constables, but taking his stand in one of the pews, he preached with his usual enthusiasm from Ephesians 2:8, 9. In the afternoon the church was closed by the government officials, and then De Cock preached in the barn of the parsonage, expounding the first and second questions of the Heidelberg Catechism:

Question 1.—What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer.—That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins and delivered me from all the power of

the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation; and therefore by his Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me sincerely willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him.

Question 2.—How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?

Answer.—Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

An appropriate and inspiring topic indeed!

On Oct. 26, 1834, no less than 150 soldiers were present to prevent De Cock from preaching in his church, and after that date almost every religious meeting of these and kindred minds was rendered impossible by the higher authorities and the irksome officiousness of the king's servants. The 31st of October De Cock was sentenced to pay a fine of 120 guilders, amounting to about \$50, and three months imprisonment for his having preached in a pew! De Cock appealed to a higher court, but on November 28 the first decision was confirmed and De Cock at once imprisoned.

The second minister, who seceded, was the Rev. H. P. Scholte, of Genderen, province of Noord Brabant, Netherlands. On Oct. 10 he had preached in De Cock's church and administered the sacrament of baptism. Oct. 12, on a Sabbath, Scholte, who was forbidden to preach in the church, addressed the people in the open air. On account of this offense he was, on the 29th of October, without any investigation on the part of the government or the Church,

first temporarily suspended from office with right of salary; eight days later, Nov. 7, he was suspended with loss of salary; and three days after this, Nov. 10, he was removed from the ministry and his consistory suspended.

Shortly afterwards a bill to the amount of \$120 was presented him by the particular synod for its tender care in behalf of his person, accompanied by a detachment of cuirassiers to enforce the suit and to establish order, but in fact to molest the peaceful villagers. Nov. 1, 1834, Scholte and his congregation tendered their "Declaration of Secession" to the church and its king.

Appealing to courts of justice was of no avail in those days. With a single exception they were all prejudiced, the judges being lawless menials of the king and his minister of religious affairs. But, as in the days of old, the more God's people were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew. The times of Philip I, king of Spain, once count of Holland, and his butcher Alba, seemed returned; only the rack, the thumbscrew and the fagot were lacking. All this could not hinder a goodly number of ministers and congregations joining the secession, and, what deserves notice, without any deliberation or negotiation with either De Cock or Scholte. This was the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

---

The Church authorities pursued their course of deposing ministers, simply because they preached the reformed doctrines and protested against prevailing heresies. The most noted among the first preachers, who were deposed, were the Revs. A. Brummelkamp, Oct. 7, 1835, G. F. Gezelle Meerburg, Nov. 24, 1835, and S. Van Velzen, Dec. 9, 1835.

An article of the Code Napoleon on unlawful assemblies was applied to the religious meetings held by those single-

hearted, God-fearing people, who always were, and still are, staunch friends and supporters of the illustrious house of Orange-Nassau. Unlawful assembly, according to Bouvier, is termed in law the meeting of three or more persons mutually to assist each other in the execution of some enterprise of a private nature, with force and violence. Under unlawful assemblies were included, in the time of the Secession, all kinds of religious meetings held outside of public places of worship. An impaired edition of the Code Napoleon regarding assemblies, forsooth! So zealous were the servants of the king and the Established Church that they ruthlessly molested and by all manner of means dispersed "societies" of even less than twenty persons, the graciously allowed number. This happened in the nineteenth century, with the approval of a Prince of Orange, by order of a so-called Church, illustrating the forbearance of liberalism!

The patient reader may think us rather harsh in denouncing, in the style which is our own, all these acts of exaction and intolerance. For that reason, and that one may fairly judge, we quote from Mr. J. Van Lennep, a noted barrister, romancer and historian, and himself a member of the Established Church. In his *History of the Netherlands*, Vol. IV, page 340, he makes the following remarks:

"Many remonstrances were presented in regard to the falling away from the standards of the Reformed Church, by those whose vocation it was to preach its doctrines. Petitions were filed in the General Assembly requesting this body to maintain the truth in all its purity. The Assembly pronounced itself incompetent to take the necessary steps leading to such an end. The result was that many, who did not hear the truth proclaimed according to their conception, and on that account had already commenced to hold

religious meetings or 'societies' for their spiritual benefit, seceded from the Established Church. Others, however, though sympathizing with the former in adherence to the fundamental truths, preferred to abide with the Church, and to continue the holy warfare within its walls. In this emergency what did the government, which had constantly preached forbearance? A retrospect of the result of persecutions exercised by the Inquisition over the Protestants, and afterwards carried on by the Arminians and Contra-Arminians mutually, might have taught it considerateness at least; but the government slighted the lessons of experience, and if it did not use sword or stake, this was owing to the changes of time and penal systems more than to the spirit which moved it.

From an article in the Constitution, insuring protection to any existing denomination, the government inferred that a new denomination could not claim protection, but must be suppressed and persecuted. Aside from the doubtful logic of this argument, the first thing to be decided upon should have been the question if the so-called seceders could be truthfully styled a new denomination. The latter asserted that new doctrines had been introduced into the Established Church they had left, and that contrariwise they adhered to the old, orthodox standards, as founded on the Holy Scriptures.

Consequently the government should have inquired into this matter, or kept silence; but it only consulted the newly-made regulations of the Church, at the instigation of the General Assembly. Some long-forgotten articles of the Penal Code, and products of revolutionary tyranny, by which assemblies numbering over twenty persons were forbidden, unless by consent of the magistrate, were brought to bear upon those people, and circuit judges were enjoined

to prosecute them in case of violation of said articles. And thus it came to pass that, under a government which vaunted toleration, harmless persons who isolated themselves for the purpose of praying, singing and listening to the exposition of truth according to their religious convictions, were brought before courts of justice, and in some places were punished with fines and imprisonment, in others were pestered with quarterings, or dispersed by military force. Nay, even if some courts acquitted, the vexations and persecutions did not cease, for the very reprobable fact that, by this time, circuit courts being instituted, those judges who had decided for acquittal were intentionally turned out of office.

Little by little however the sentiment of the people in general denounced the course taken by the government, and permission was granted the Seceders to organize separate congregations. But not before another William took the reins of government did the worryings, to which they were continually exposed, cease."

---

On the 8th of April, 1835, the first Particular Synod met at Groningen, and on the 2d of March, 1836, the first Synod (General Assembly) was held at Amsterdam. The Church was denominated the Christian Seceder Church, firstly because the government monopolized the name „Reformed" as a right pertaining to the Established Institute; and secondly, because the several Seceder congregations which applied for acknowledgment—the same as incorporation in this country—were recorded as such by the state.

Not until 1869 was the sum total of the congregations, acknowledged by the government, and accorded the name of Christian Reformed Church. This did not imply that the new denomination was set on a level with the other denom-

inations, Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Baptists; in no wise, for while the latter were maintained by the state's finances, the Christian Reformed people had to sustain their own congregations, besides paying taxes for the support of the former. And this is the situation of the Christian Reformed Church in the old country until the present day.

By this time the few congregations and ministers of 1834 had increased their numbers to 300 and 225 respectively. The Secession became widespread; the love for the old truths became general. The first preachers received their theological training from ministers living in different parts of the country, and soon the assumption prevailed—for the good Holland people are all said to be theologians in their own way—that the ministers were different one from another; but this was not in the substance of the preaching, but in the way of presenting the truth, which was a matter of course, as every servant of Christ has his own talent or talents from the Lord. This prejudice was soon done away with however by the institution in 1854 of the theological seminary at Kampen, with four professors—T. F. De Haan, S. Van Velzen, A. Brummelkamp (the two last named being brothers-in-law to Dr. A. C. Van Raalte, the founder of the Dutch colony and Holland City, Ottawa Co., Mich.), and H. De Cock, son of the late father of the Secession, who died November 14, 1842.

The first ministers, who could not receive an adequate theological training, as afforded at Kampen, have none the less been signally qualified and blessed by the Lord of the vineyard. The first professors of Kampen Seminary have all been called to their eternal reward, after having lived to a good old age. Their places have been taken by a younger generation, the children of the Secession. The first professors rendered the best of services to the rising Church.

They will be in blessed remembrance as long as the Christian Reformed Church shall last, especially by those who were brought up at their feet and received their theological instruction at Kampen Seminary. Among these last are the three theological professors in our own seminary at Grand Rapids, the writer of this sketch, and several of the preachers in our Church of to-day, who successively came over from the Netherlands to serve in the American field.

At the present day the theological department of the Kampen Seminary has five professors, among whom the illustrious divine and splendid orator, H. Bavinck, D. D., stands prominent, with 71 students. The literary department, with an equal number of professors, has 70 students.

---

In the year 1886 an all-wise Providence caused the learned Dr. A. Kuyper, of world-wide repute, with many others, to be expelled from the Established Institute. Many long years this great and good man of God, this eloquent preacher, this indefatigable worker for the cause of truth, had in some respects successfully labored to restore the Established Church to its old-time glory as a pillar and ground of the truth. Many within the pale of the Church had by the grace of God and by Dr. Kuyper's untiring zeal, been enlightened as to the truth and the corrupted condition of the Church, and turned to the old ways to walk therein. But the government and the spirit of the Church leaders had remained the same, as was clearly shown by the turning out in one day of Dr. A. Kuyper and some eighty elders and members of the Church.

This was the signal for a new movement, viz., the voluntary leaving by divers congregations and persons in different parts of the land of an Institute which, by its fatal Erastian government, and consequently hierarchical actions of its

judicatories, pandered to all shades of heterodoxies, and sheltered all kinds of heretics, but in the meantime was fierce in denouncing and removing those God-fearing men who stood by the truth, and whose only and holy aim it was to serve God according to the dictates of his Word and the good, old Standards of the Church.

A friend of the writer, the first minister who left the Established Institute, in 1886, with all of his congregation, the Rev. G. Vlug, preached to his people on the first Sabbath after that event from the well-chosen text: "The snare is broken, and we are escaped" (Ps. 124:7)—a word of God which fittingly voiced the sentiment of the Seceders of the second great period in the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

These Reformed people persistently declined the name of Seceders or Separatists, they being unwilling, and for good reasons, to give up their title either to the name or the property of the Established Institute, but called themselves "DOLEERENDE," from the Latin "doleo," i. e., mourn, signifying those who bemoaned the "doleful" condition of the Church. They had to give up both, however. Who should persuade Ahab?

It goes without saying that there was much rejoicing in the old Seceder camp, most of all because "the snare was broken." Brotherly congratulations were most cordially extended, and even a little courting was indulged in; but the "Doleerende", hoping against hope, preferred a reunion with their first, though faithless love, the Established Institute, if so be she would better her ways. But no such thing occurred. Man proposes, God disposes.

The limited space of this outline does not permit us to enlarge upon the motives for not entering sooner into denominational union with the old Seceder Church. Suffice

it to say that, in the year of grace 1892 this melting together was effected to the gratification of all who had so long prayed for the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and church fellowship. These United, Presbyterian, Reformed Churches accepted the name of Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. At the time of the union of these bodies, June 17, 1892, they numbered 700 congregations in 583 different locations, the old branch contributing 400 and the new 300.

Oct. 20, 1880, some forty consecrated men, members of the Established Institute, who hoped for and aimed at the reviving of the distinctive principles, brought into being the "Vrije Universiteit" (Free University), which reckons, for particular reasons, its birthday from Feb. 2, 1897. It is located at Amsterdam, the country's capital. The Doleerend of half a dozen years later were, so to speak, cradled there. The originator and soul of this splendid institution is that already mentioned, world-famed theologian, orator, author, and politician of large influence, A. Kuyper, D. D., of his eminent scholarly colleagues "facile princeps." There are two more doctors of divinity for the theological faculty, one doctor of law for the juridical faculty, and one doctor of letters for the literary faculty, all able and skillful men. To-day there are 112 students in all—theology, 76; letters, 17; law, 22. A Reformed gymnasium or college, connected with the University, counts 112 pupils. Side by side these institutions, at Kampen and Amsterdam, work for the good of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

---

Times have marvelously changed since 1834. Then a handful of godly people, standing by the faith once delivered to the saints—now an army of many, many thousands, who do not bow unto the god of this world. Several of them

have been knighted by the late King William III, and afterwards by his noble wife, the Queen-Regent; even some of the old guard having been thus honored on account of their good citizenship and valuable services rendered the country by their religious and philanthropic operations and in many other ways.

The Reformed Churches brought their beneficial influence to bear upon social and political issues, and the signal favor of the Most High is their crowning glory.

It is from those Reformed people of glorious Reformation times; it is from these persecuted believers, who through so much earthly tribulation entered into their earthly Canaan, and many of them into the heavenly, that the Christian Reformed Church of America mainly received its constituents.

But ere we enter upon this new field of narration, let me try to complete the brief story of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands by relating what they have performed in the line of missions. In all these years, from 1834 and upwards, the spirit of missions was glowing in the Churches of the exodus; but not until some internal dissensions had been fairly subdued, the unity of the Spirit secured, and home mission work provided for, could foreign mission work be earnestly thought of and started. And whereas little Holland, with a population of about six millions of inhabitants, has extensive colonies in the East Indies, with nearly twenty millions of population, most of them Mohammedans, it was but natural to perform a long-neglected duty by first ministering to the needs of these benighted people.

The first two missionaries were unsuccessful, chiefly on account of deficient training for the work, proving by their example that emissaries of Christ, in order to be, with the blessing of God, abundant in labors and good results, should not only be men of God, full of Christ and love to souls,

but should receive an adequate training, should have good scholarship, and be the recipients of those particular attainments which are the special gifts from the Lord of the vineyard to whomsoever He calls to that most arduous task of winning the heathen for the kingdom.

The Rev. Enno R. Haan was sent to Java, Sept. 17, 1873. As the pioneer in the work, he deserves especial mention and credit for the good he did during his ten years' stay in that unhealthy climate. On returning to his native land, in 1883, he had the comfort of leaving to his successor two congregations, one of converted natives at Quitang, and another of Hollanders at Batavia. Failing health caused him to repatriate. He first lectured throughout the Netherlands on the cause of missions, was afterwards called to a pastorate, and is now the beloved pastor of one of our Christian Reformed congregations at Grand Rapids, Mich.

His successor was the able and amiable Rev. D. Huysing, who faithfully and successfully prosecuted the work so hopefully begun.

The Rev. A. Delfos was sent out in 1884. He labored at Soerabaya, Java, where he gathered a congregation of Hollanders residing there, meanwhile ministering unto the natives. All too soon he was obliged to give up the work on account of ill-health. His successor was the Rev. A. Bolwijn.

In 1887 the Rev. W. Pos, and a year later, the Rev. C. De Bruin were sent to the island Soomba. They proved excellent workers, and soon organized a little congregation of natives.

In 1894, after the consolidation of the Christian Reformed Church and the Doleerende, the Rev. B. J. Horstman and Mr. Scheurer, M. D., were added to the forces in Central Java. A hospital has been established by the latter, where

every week hundreds of sick people receive medical treatment, the gospel treatment included.

The last, who was sent as a missionary to Purworedjo, Java, is the Rev. L. Adriaanse, for some years a minister of the Word in the Reformed Church at Utrecht, Netherlands.

Twenty-five years of consecutive, earnest labor by the missionaries of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands have proven true the promise of the Lord: "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." Faith and perseverance have—as usually along this line of Christian activity—been many a time put to the severest test, but Christ shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands bid fair to become the glory of the land. And so does their missionary work. "Soli Deo Gloria!"

---

## II.

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.*

In the year 1609 the Dutch East India Company sent out Captain Hudson, with the merchant-man "De Halve Maan," i. e. "The Crescent," in order to find a northwestern passage to the East Indies. This passage was not found, but the result of this enterprise was of great import to the

cause of religion. It really led to the transplanting of the Dutch Reformed Church to American soil.

Business negotiations were opened on a large scale with the Americans. Soon more Holland people came over, and on the spot where Capt. Hudson first landed a fort was built, which, with more people immigrating, gave birth in 1612 to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, now New York. Later on Fort Orange was built, 150 miles up the Hudson River, where the city of Albany is now found.

Pious immigrants and ministers arrived in the very beginning of the colony, but all historians agree in not knowing at what time the first Reformed congregation was organized. The Collegiate Church is supposed to have been formed in 1619. This was the origin of the Dutch Reformed Church in America, which is second in chronological order in this country, the Episcopalian being first.

The Dutch Reformed Church sustained relations with the mother country, and from there received its ministers and increased membership. It was the established Church of the colony until the colony's surrender to the British in 1664; after which its circumstances were materially changed and its growth checked. In 1693 the House of Assembly yielded to the plan of Governor Fletcher, and passed an act which went to establish the Episcopal Church. From that year until 1776 the Dutch, English, Presbyterian, Scotch, and all non-Episcopal inhabitants of the city and county of New York, and adjoining counties, were obliged not only to support their own ministers, but sustain, through a heavy taxation, the small body of Episcopalians. In this way many members were alienated from the Dutch Reformed Church. During this period it also experienced severe losses from another cause. Despite the fact, which was plainly apparent, that the English language was to become the

common language of the country, there was a questionable persistence in the use of the Dutch language in the services of the Church, notwithstanding that a large body of the younger members clamored for a change, which would accommodate both German and English hearers. Finally, in 1764, the point was yielded, and preaching in English permitted, though not until many of the members were driven off into other denominations. (An object lesson for the Christian Reformed Church of to-day.)

From the commencement of the Dutch Reformed Church in this country it was subordinate to the Classis of Amsterdam. The Church could not ordain ministers or judicially decide in ecclesiastical disputes without the consent of said Classis. The result was a controversy which agitated the Church for more than thirty years, from 1737 tot 1771. A movement was set on foot to throw off dependence on the present Classis. This occasioned a violent contest, which was not terminated till 1771, when Rev. Dr. Livingston, having previously convinced the Classis of Amsterdam of the desirableness of the measure, and having prepared the way by consulting wise men of both parties, induced the consistory of his church to call a convention.

The convention met in New York in October, 1771, and resulted in a harmonious arrangement for a complete organization of the Dutch Reformed Church in this country as an independent body. It adopted the same standards as the mother Church, viz., the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt on the famous five points: Divine Predestination, Definite Atonement of Christ, Man's Entire Corruption and Helplessness, His Conversion by God's Grace Alone, and Perseverance of the Saints.

In 1810 the theological seminary at New Brunswick was

the old country. If Holland be taken as the center, Vriesland, the farthest was and is only nine miles off:

Five had log churches, and soon after all of them had built themselves suitable places for public worship, Zeeland having one of the finest in the solid colonial style. By the blessing of God all this was brought about in two years' time without any outside financial support. The people worked in faith and hope, dependent upon God alone. During the first year a General Assembly was convened, and then it was resolved that henceforth two such gatherings should be held.

Thus far all went well materially and spiritually, and better than might have been anticipated, taking into consideration the many privations and dangers the people were exposed to, the malarial diseases peculiar to soil and climate; the unwonted and toilsome labor in the woods, and last not least the variety of the people, who, though all coming from a common fatherland, had their peculiar shades of religious opinion according to their training received at home.

If the Holland people had continued the course taken, "to be by themselves in Church matters," if they had sustained or sought ecclesiastical correspondence with the mother Church in the old country, there might never have been that much-deplored religious breach between the Reformed people which occurred not long afterwards.

Dr. A. C. Van Raalte and the Rev. H. P. Scholte had left the Netherlands of their own accord, without acknowledging the mother Church in requesting credentials or letters of recommendation; neither had the people, who had followed them in the exodus. Consequently there was no connection between the Reformed colonists and the Christian Reformed Church abroad.

As Christian gentlemen the Rev. Dr. Thomas De Witt of New York, the Rev. Dr. Wyckoff of Albany, the Rev. Romein of Detroit, and the Rev. Hoydt of Kalamazoo, besides Judge Kellogg of Allegan, had given the Rev. Van Raalte the best of advice in regard to colonization, etc., but outside of this the Dutch Reformed Church as a body had not, up to this time, shown any particular interest in the newly-arrived immigrants.

June 1, 1849, Dr. Wyckoff appeared upon the scene. On his tour westward in the interest of home missions he also visited the new Dutch colony. The people were delighted to meet with a Christian minister of the Reformed denomination and to receive words of encouragement and good cheer from his lips. He at once desired a meeting to be called, as he had urgent business in Wisconsin; but on being requested to remain a few days and to look over the new colony, he assented. In the meantime an assembly of ministers and elders was convened. These brethren could not be said to be duly delegated by their congregations, opportunity lacking; they had no credentials to present, with directions to negotiate or to act on so important a matter as "corporate union." None the less, this assembly was considered a regular, duly constituted one. But for this very reason, when the matter of union with the (then) Dutch Reformed Church of America was brought up, many of the brethren reluctantly entered into the consideration and discussion of an issue of so great moment.

Three questions were asked by Dr. Wyckoff: 1. What are your religious standards? 2. Do you desire to unite with the Dutch Reformed Church? 3. Do you want any financial help?

The first and third questions were easily and readily answered. As to the second, there were not a few mis-

givings. Most of the people did not understand the English language well enough to judge intelligently of matters pertaining to the religious condition of the Dutch Reformed Church, while others were not at all acquainted with that ecclesiastical body. The testimonies of Dr. Van Raalte and a few others in regard to its doctrines and practices were the only sources from which the people could draw the so much needed intelligence. The Dutch people are singularly cautious, and no wonder—thoughts of bondage, oppression and persecution still haunting them, and so many demurred.

But finally the assurances of Dr. Wyckoff, that his Church was sound in doctrine and exactly the same as the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands, prevailed and caused the Assembly to decide in favor of denominational union with the Dutch Reformed Church. Whosoever still hesitated was fully tranquilized by Dr. Wyckoff's solemn declaration, which in the report to his Church he put down in these words: "I STATED THAT THEY WOULD BE MOST PERFECTLY FREE, AT ANY TIME THEY FOUND AN ECCLESIASTICAL CONNECTION OPPOSED TO THEIR RELIGIOUS PROSPERITY OR ENJOYMENT, TO BID US A FRATERNAL ADIEU AND BE BY THEMSELVES."

This settled the question. And on these grounds the denominational union of the Reformed Dutch settlers with the Dutch Reformed Church was pronounced an accomplished fact.

---

Some, however, could not help complaining of the hurried way in which this momentous step was taken, and the people, since that time aroused and feeling the need of better acquainting themselves with the new dispensation they lived under and the new Church they were now connected with, found that the preaching and practice of the Dutch

Reformed Church differed a good deal from what had been told them, and that in uniting with it the necessary precautions and considerations had been lost sight of. Complaints were made to that effect. Dr. Van Raalte used all his logic and eloquence to convince the people that there was no positive reason for uneasiness. But the more the people learned the real state of affairs, the more they felt that they had done the wrong thing. As early as 1852, at a classical meeting held at Zeeland, freemasonry and other objectionable features of the Dutch Reformed Church were made points of discussion and the desirableness was expressed of becoming an independent, separate Holland Reformed Church.

The Dutch Reformed Church could not—at least not in the estimation of these colonists—consistently or fully claim the epithet „Reformed,” while some fundamental doctrines were sadly overlooked or misinterpreted by not a few preachers. Richard Baxter’s “Roepstem tot de Onbekeerden” (obviously an earnest and well-meant appeal to repentance) was highly recommended by leaders in the Church, though a century ago condemned by Erskine and Comrie as heterodox in some points. The Lord’s table was found open to members of every so-called Christian denomination. In public praise a hymn book was used, containing some 800 songs of human composition, with only 69 out of the 150 Psalms of the Bible.

All this proved clearly that the Dutch Reformed Church was not at all like the Christian Reformed Church of the Netherlands. This was too much for many who clung to the old-time religion, who for conscience’s sake had given up the Established Church in the old country; there was too much contrary to their religious convictions, to be tolerated without complaint or protest. But the leaders

among the colonists refused to go back and to withdraw from the Dutch Reformed Church.

Disagreement between brethren grew daily. The crisis had come. March 14, 1857, Rev. K. Van den Bosch, of Noordeloos, with 16 members, sent in their letter of withdrawal from the Dutch Reformed Church.

The Graafschap congregation, then without a minister, came next. April 7 they drew up their act of secession from the Dutch Reformed Church of America, signed by 113 members (11 remaining with the old flock), and presented it the next day to the Classis, then convened at Zeeland.

March 19, the Rev. G. H. Klyn of Grand Rapids joined the secession, but soon flopped back, leaving behind enough sheep to form a congregation, which ere long became one of the largest and most prosperous in that locality.

Vriesland, Zeeland, and others soon followed.

This was the origin of the Holland Christian Reformed Church of America of to-day. The original standpoint of old-country fame and freedom was regained.

First she adopted the reactionary name of "The True Dutch Reformed Church." In 1880 she took the old-country name, with the additional "Holland." In 1894 she dropped the "Holland," since she included English and German-speaking congregations as well as Holland.

The development of the Church was at first an extremely slow one, as are all things worth living and predestined to be a blessing to generations for ages to come. When ascending to heaven our gracious Lord could point to only a few hundreds of professed believers.

Saddest of all to the hearts of those brave and godly pioneers was the fact that the much-beloved mother Church

in the Netherlands had her misgivings as to the legal birth of the new-born American sister.

The future looked anything but bright, with only one undershepherd, the Rev. K. Van den Bosch, to minister to the wants of the various congregations, which at first were small and financially too weak to call and sustain ministers of their own; but faith in God and the consciousness of serving a good and holy cause enabled them soon to call ministers from the old country. The Revs. W. H. Van Leeuwen, D. J. Van der Werp (an uncle of the writer), and J. H. Frieling were among the first to heed the cry: "Come over and help us."

After that time the growth of the Church became marvelous. More ministers from the Netherlands came on call, among whom was the writer of this sketch, and they heartily embraced the movement of 1857. By degrees the Christian Reformed Church in the old country got better informed with, and more favorably inclined towards, the new denomination, this being accomplished through private correspondence, written apologies, and delegations to the Netherland Church of brethren who aforetime had served in its ranks. The result was that brethren, requesting letters of membership before leaving the fatherland, were given the advice of being very careful in the choice of a Church when arriving in the West, yea some congregations, more positive than others, in filling out credentials, had the firmness to direct the address exclusively to the Christian Reformed Church. Most of the immigrants, after 1880, found in the Christian Reformed Church what they left in the mother Church, and thanked God. They reported so to relatives left behind, who, in their turn coming over, joined the Christian Reformed Church without any hesitation, and accessions were and are many up to this date.

From 1879 till 1881 the Holland branch of the Dutch Reformed Church, especially the Michigan and Wisconsin classes, remonstrated time and again in many consecutive General Assemblies of said body against the tolerating of freemasons and such like as members of the Church and communicants, but, as might be expected, without any success, divers members and presidents themselves being lodgemen. The Dutch Reformed Church could not, or would not, take any decisive step in that matter, at least not to the satisfaction of the Hollanders. The General Assembly asserted that, according to "Reformed Church polity" it could not go any farther than to leave the decision of disciplining members of secret societies to the respective classes. Afterwards, when this action did not prove satisfactory to the various classes and congregations, it was resolved to refer the matter to the consistories for final decision. Consequently members of the American Reformed Church could be seen moving from First Street church to Third Street church, in the same locality, for the simple reason that in First Street no lodgemen were tolerated, but graciously received in Third. These curiosities, to be true to history, are getting scarce day by day on account of the more forbearing attitude of the Church toward the lodge.

In 1882 the Christian Reformed Synod of Zwolle, Netherlands, had the boldness to send a general epistle to the General Assembly of the Dutch Reformed Church, the burden of which was: "*Brethren, put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*" It was received in a manner between a smile and a sneer. Since that date the Christian Reformed Church of the Netherlands has fallen from grace, the grace of the elder American sister.

Owing to the fact that entreaties to check the growing



THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.



decline in doctrine and practice resulted in utter disappointment, in 1882 a second withdrawal from the American Reformed Church was effected by the following congregations: Grand Rapids, Zeeland, Grand Haven, Drenthe, East Saugatuck, Montague, and Holland, the late Dr. Van Raalte's church. After due consideration all these united with the Christian Reformed Church.

In 1890 the True Protestant Dutch Reformed Church, consisting of a dozen congregations in New Jersey and New York, which as early as 1822 had seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church for reasons just mentioned, also joined our Church and swelled its ranks.

The Christian Reformed Church of to-day numbers:

Classes or Presbyteries.	Fami- lies.	Commu- nicants.	Souls.	Congre- gations.	Min- isters.
Grand Rapids....	2,614	3,829	13,216	25	17
Holland .....	2,021	3,712	9,938	19	15
Muskegon .....	1,438	1,912	9,951	16	8
Illinois .....	1,273	2,221	6,567	14	13
Hudson .....	838	1,520	4,157	9	6
Iowa .....	1,084	2,194	5,778	25	14
Ostfriesland .....	485	816	2,502	14	8
Hackensack .....	549	568	1,878	13	9
Total 8	10,302	16,772	50,987	135	89

Ministers deceased, 17; retired, 3; candidates, 2.

The first preacher appointed to educate young men for the ministry of the Word was the Rev. W. H. Van Leeuwen. The only one who received his theological preparation from him (and that but in part) was the Rev. J. Schepers, now at Vogel Center, Mich., a cousin of the late Rev. J. R. Schepers, who was ordained by the United Presbyterian Church in the fifties and sent to labor among the Hollanders scattered throughout Indiana, especially in Lafayette and vicinity. The origin of our Christian Reformed congregation in that locality has to be traced from that source.

The second professor was the late Rev. D. J. Van der Werp, from 1864 to 1875. The Revs. J. Schepers, J. Stad, W. Greve, L. Rietdijk, G. Broene, C. Bode, C. Vorst, and J. Van der Werp were his students.

His successor was the Rev. G. E. Boer, then pastor at Grand Rapids. In 1876 he was appointed by the General Assembly of our Church, held at Chicago. Released from his charge, he preached his farewell sermon March 12, 1876, and entered upon his new duties March 15, 1876, with an oration on "The Training of Future Ministers of the Gospel." For over twenty years the professor has labored and is still laboring with devotion and success. Through his instrumentality many good preachers have been given to the Church. To him the Church owes a never-to be paid debt of gratitude for his labors as professor of theology, as editor for many years of our Church organ, *De Wachter*, and his services rendered to the Church in many other ways.

In September, 1884, the Rev. G. K. Hemkes, pastor of Vriesland congregation, was elected professor of theology and installed as such, the Church thus providing for a long-felt want, as the number of students was steadily on the increase. A thoroughbred scholar, the professor can be found among his students and his books the whole year round.

In 1888 Mr. G. Vos, Ph. D., was called to the professorship. He accepted, and fulfilled his duties with marked success for five years, when a repeated call from Princeton Seminary led him to the chair of biblical theology in that institution as Prof. G. Vos, Ph. D., D. D. Cradled in our Church, we are justly proud of him, even though the illustrious doctor pitched his tent elsewhere. As a Calvinist, scholar, thinker, writer, he is known to be second to none. We hope and trust that the Church of Christ at large may

be benefited by his leaving the limited sphere of our denominational existence.

In 1894 the Rev. H. Beuker, of Muskegon, who the previous year had come from the Netherlands, was chosen to occupy the chair of systematic theology, left vacant by the departure of Dr. Vos since 1892. Dr. Beuker is a favorite alike with the students and with the people. Like his colleagues past sixty, he owes his popularity to his cheerful disposition, his many-sided experience, and his thoroughness in teaching.

Messrs. K. Schoolland and A. Rooks, able men of letters, are instructors in the literary department, honoring their profession and our institution.

There are in all 46 students; 20 in the theological department, among whom is Mr. Isaac Adams, a Persian, and 26 in the literary department. A fine Seminary Hall in one of the most beautiful and healthy parts of the Valley City was erected in 1892 at a cost of about \$30,000. Constructed in the latest and best architectural style, and fully answering the purpose, it stands out as an ornament to the city and a monument to the Christian Reformed people, who always prove cheerful givers where the cause of Christ and his Church is concerned.

---

The cause of missions always filled a large place in the hearts of our people; but the penury of colonial conditions at first, the financial weakness of the Church for some time afterwards, and the littleness of the amount contributed for such a grand purpose in later years, made people scrupulous in regard to any private enterprise of their own along the line of missions. On that account contributions were for many years sent to the Christian Reformed Church in the

Netherlands, for the support of those missions in the East Indies, mentioned in the first part of our sketch.

In 1886 a mission of our own was planned. The American Indian was made the subject of much discussion in the Synod of 1888, and, the majority being in favor, it was decided to send to the Indians Rev. T. M. Van den Bosch, who had some experience in home mission work. After due ceremonials, he entered in 1889 upon his labors as a missionary among the heathen of our country. He was not long in the field however. At his own request he was recalled in 1890, on account of failing health. Because of this ill-luck at first effort, which could hardly be called an earnest effort, in 1894 the Synod, not being unanimous in the course to be taken in the future, entered into correspondence with the United Presbyterian Church, principally with an eye to mission work, but with the thought that, perchance, after closer acquaintance with said Church, a mutual recognition as Reformed Presbyterian Sister Churches might be reached. This correspondence is still going on, the first step in the direction of mutual acknowledgement, for various reasons, not yet having been taken at the present date. The Christian Reformed Church may be considered cautious to a fault in the matter of union, but sad experience, as shown above, has taught her the "*festina lente*."

In 1896 a candidate of theology, who had studied with a view especially to mission work among the Red Men, presented himself to the Synod when in session, at the time when the matter of mission was brought up. He declared his intention to go at once, if the Church should so desire. This made the Synod's vote as to the field not only easy, but almost obligatory, the Church, eight years before, having decided that point, and the candidate having adapted his studies to this end and elected his "*futura*," who had a

warm heart for the Indians. The result could easily be foreseen. The resolution of 1888 was maintained by a large majority. So the labor among the Indians was resumed, and Arizona chosen as the field. Four months later the Rev. H. Fryling was ordained and sent out as the first missionary, with his wife, to the Navajoes of Arizona, a tribe which numbers from 20,000 to 30,000 people. Mr. A. Van der Wagen, a student of theology, burning with love for the American Indians, with his wife, an able teacher and nurse, were added to the missionary as assistants and co-laborers. In less than half a year Mrs. H. Fryling, a sufferer of consumption, died cheerfully at her post at the age of 24, rejoicing to breathe her last amidst the tribe she had learned to love and which loved her. In 1897 Mr. J. E. De Groot, a teacher, was sent to assist the Rev. Fryling in his loneliness and manifold labors. The committee on Missions among the Heathen was obliged thus to strengthen the arms of Mr. Fryling, as, at the urgent request of another contiguous tribe, the New Mexico Zuni's, Mr. Van der Wagen and his wife had been ordered thither.

They all are efficient and successful workers, doing excellent work, regularly teaching the Indian children in the government boarding schools or at the missionary's home; preaching at stated times to government officials and the grown up Indian people; learning the languages of said tribes and composing dictionaries for themselves and future missionaries. These Indian people are not, as is the common notion, decreasing, but increasing in numbers, and they are peerless lovers of their native land. God bless our mission!

The Jewish missions in Chicago and New York are supported by the Christian Reformed Church, with an average donation of \$800 per year.

Besides Dorcas, Tryphena, and Tryphosa and kindred circles of women, laboring in the Lord, the Church has its Young Men's and Young Daughter's Christian Societies in almost every congregation.

There is established also in Grand Rapids, Mich., an Aged People's Home, called Holland Home, where at a moderate price old people of the Reformed denomination are cared for materially and spiritually.

A sanitarium for consumptives, Bethesda, is being built at Maxwell City, New Mexico, at the initiative of Prof. Beuker, who for years in the Netherlands has been working along philanthropic lines. He is meeting with the hearty approval and efficient co operation of many in the Church and outside, who on the altar of love and sympathy willingly lay their offerings to assuage or heal the miseries of suffering humanity. At Maxwell there is a little Christian Reformed congregation. The pastor, the Rev. I. Van Dellen, ministers to the wants of his church members, who for the most part are patients, as is, or was, his own wife. He is, by common consent, the right man in the right place.

The only Holland Christian Reformed Church organ is "*De Wachter*," or, in English, "*The Watchman*," a weekly of some thirty years' standing, with an able editor-in-chief, the Rev. A. Keizer of Graafschap, Mich., and three assistant editors. Its circulation is 2,350.

The English-speaking classis of our church, Hackensack, N. J., furnishes a monthly, "*The Banner of Truth*," the Rev. J. C. Voorhis of Hackensack, being editor. It firmly upholds the doctrine and polity of the early Dutch Reformed Church. Its circulation is in no wise limited to New York or New Jersey, a good many of our people reading and understanding both the Holland and English languages.

The "*Gereformeerde Amerikaan*," the "*Reformed American*," is a Holland monthly of recent birth, having just entered the second year of its orthodox existence. It is intended for the more religiously developed among the people and bids fair to become a power for good in advocating and advancing the "strictly reformed" principles and practices in ecclesiastical and social life. The Rev. F. M. Ten Hoor, Prof. H. Beuker, D. D. and the Rev. H. Van Hoogen are the editors, with a great corps of assistants. Circulation 350.

For the sake of completeness and for those who do not know the Christian Reformed Church of America in regard to its polity, we note the following:

The government of the Christian Reformed Church is Presbyterian, only a different nomenclature is used in some respects in speaking of ecclesiastical affairs. The consistory, or session, is composed of the minister, ruling elders and deacons. They meet at stated times as a spiritual court to transact spiritual concerns, such as the admission of members and the exercise of discipline. The ruling elders, instead of being elected for life, as with the Presbyterians of other denominations, are appointed for two years. If acceptable to the church, they may be appointed again for another term or terms, or after having been out of office for one year at least. The deacons are charged with the care for the poor. They are elected the same way as the elders.

The next court is the classis, or presbytery, which is a representative body; all the congregations being represented there by one minister and one elder, or two elders for vacant congregations.

The highest court, from which there is no appeal, is the Synod or General Assembly, constituted until some years

ago in the same way as the classes; but since the number of congregations has considerably increased, since the distance from Grand Rapids (where in the Seminary Hall its sessions are held) for many a delegate amounts to hundreds of miles, and the expenses became rather burdensome, the representation, by resolution of the late Synod, has been reduced to three ministers and three elders from each classis, which will make the total of delegates 48 for the future, unless a new classis be formed. The Synod's sessions are held every other year, and its affairs conducted much in the same method with all other Presbyterian Churches.

---

Such is the history of the Christian Reformed Church of America. The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. To Him alone be the glory!

Our Church is, as may be seen from this sketch, in a flourishing condition financially and spiritually, the influx from the Netherlands and Germany furnishing it each year with fresh supplies of godly men and women. Besides these, we have as a source of increase the rising generations from our own households.

Many are the blessings we enjoy in this good land of ours, inducing us to unbounded thankfulness, which however is too often withheld from the Father of lights.

Many are the duties devolving upon us as a body of Reformed Christians, who have been so signally blessed and protected by the hand of Divine Providence.

Many are the possibilities before us, which should cause us continually to offer the first disciples' prayer: "Lord, increase our faith." Oh, for more love to Christ and the everlasting gospel, for more compassion for dying men, for more consecrated lives in the service of our God!

The dangers surrounding our Church are not to be slighted: the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life besides the hosts of the power of darkness standing in battle-array against the Lord and his Anointed, and against his saints on earth.

If we continue in the ways of the Lord, though we be small, yet we may be a power for good in the land which the Lord our God has given us.

May the Christian Reformed Church in regard to God's truth be ever mindful of the device of the Princes of Orange-Nassau: "Je Maintiendrai" (I shall maintain).

Our merciful God and Father grant us grace to stand manfully by our distinctive principles, never faltering, never failing, firm in the faith once delivered to the saints, faithful unto death, trusting in God alone, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the injunction from on high: "*Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown,*" spur us on to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Then ours will be in endless ages the fulfillment of that glorious promise of our Saviour and our God: "I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."

Fremont, Mich., March 1898.



